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RAISING BELGIAN HARES AND OTHER RABBITS

DAVID E. LANTZ

Assistant Biologist



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E. W. NELSON, Chief

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THE present shortage of farm live stock throughout the country is one that can not be remedied quickly. In the Belgian hare and other domesticated rabbits we have animals that breed rapidly, mature early, and furnish a palatable and highly nutritious meat. The supply can be increased enormously within a few months, without using space that may be needed for the production of crops. Rabbit meat can be produced in almost unlimited quantities at a less cost than that of any other meat, not excepting poultry.

The business of growing rabbits on farms and on village lots affords opportunity for an agreeable change in the family diet, for cutting down the cost of living, and for conserving the meat supply of the country. Though not always yielding large profits, it is a reasonably remunerative adjunct to other pursuits; and, with a favorable market, may be expanded into a commercially successful vocation. It is especially suited to young people. It is hoped that the present bulletin may be helpful to many who will engage in a work that should be of great importance at this time, especially if the rabbits are grown for home use.

RAISING BELGIAN HARES AND OTHER RABBITS.

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RABBITS AS FOOD.

IN the United States wild rabbits always have been an important source of food, especially during the cold part of the year, and hence less attention has been paid to the breeding of rabbits than in most foreign countries. It would be impossible to estimate correctly the number of rabbits marketed and eaten in Great Britain. Before the present war not only were the home warrens and farms drawn upon for a supply, but from 10,000 to 12,000 tons were imported annually, partly from the Continent, but in greatest numbers from Australia and New Zealand. In France, Holland, and Belgium rabbits were a common article of diet, and rabbit breeding was general, especially on the smaller farms. Spain produces many domestic rabbits and is sometimes regarded as the original home of the common European rabbit. The so-called Belgian hare is merely a domesticated form of the wild rabbit of Europe, long bred with special reference to the development of a superior food animal. Its flesh is generally considered better than that of the ordinary hutch rabbit.

The Belgian hare is one of the best rabbits for table use. It weighs more than most breeds, develops very rapidly, and the quality of the meat is superior to all the others. The Flemish giant is a cross between the Belgian hare and other breeds, developed especially for large size, with the result that the flesh may be slightly coarser in mature animals. With young hutch rabbits, few persons can distinguish differences in the quality of the flesh of the various breeds. Much of the excellence of the rabbit as food depends on the rapidity of its growth and still more on the manner of cooking it. As often prepared, it is dry and insipid; but in the hands of an ex-

perienced cook it becomes all that the most fastidious taste can wish. An especial requirement in cooking the Belgian hare is that none of the natural juices of the meat be lost in the process.

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BELGIAN HARE.

The Belgian hare probably originated in Belgium or northern France. It was known very generally in the northern part of Continental Europe before the attention of English fanciers was directed to it. As their first stock came from Belgium, that country was credited with having originated the breed. The chief known reason for calling the animal a hare lies in its resemblance in color to the wild hare (see illustration on title page).

In the hands of English fanciers the Belgian hare was improved greatly. The English standard for the breed was adopted in 1889, and a few years later standard-bred animals were brought to America, where they soon became exceedingly popular. The finest show animals often commanded very high prices, and extraordinary claims were made concerning the excellence of the breed for the table. As was natural, when the reaction came and the public learned that the Belgian hare is a rabbit not vastly superior to other breeds, the animal was unjustly condemned and fell into disfavor. As a consequence, the whole business of breeding domestic rabbits in the United States was for a time neglected.

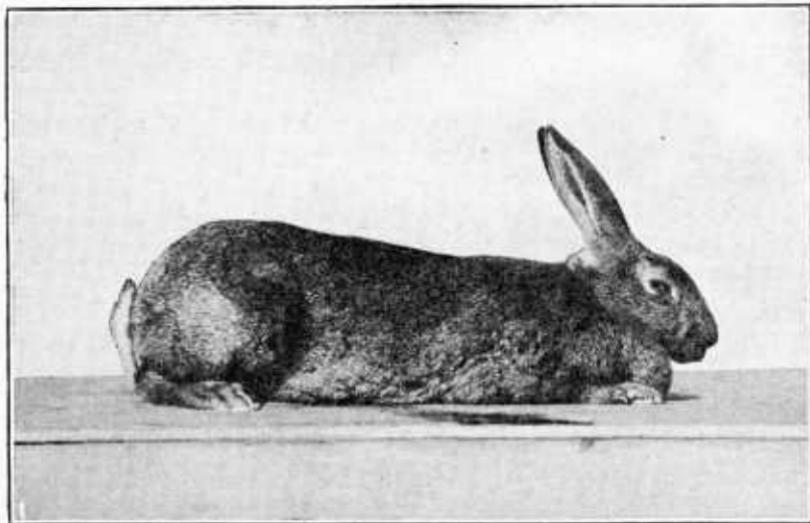


FIG. 1.—Female Flemish giant.

In spite of the setback caused by the collapse of the Belgian-hare bubble, this breed has maintained a greater popularity than any

other, and many breeders are still raising and improving it. The Flemish giant (fig. 1), owing to its greater size, is preferred by some. The fact that rabbits are easily grown and are a cheap and excellent substitute for the ordinary meats is likely to turn the attention of many more persons to rearing the animals. That they can be propagated without costly investment in land and buildings is a peculiar advantage. Further, the presence on the farm of another animal which, like poultry, may be killed and prepared for the table entire and at short notice, is exceedingly desirable.

CARE OF OTHER BREEDS OF RABBITS.

The directions herein given for the care of Belgian rabbits are applicable to the management of most other breeds. The ordinary English rabbit, regarded as of less value as a food animal, is even more hardy and therefore needs less care. The lop-eared rabbits and possibly a few other breeds require artificially heated quarters in winter, but in other respects their management is the same as for the Belgians.

SELECTION OF STOCK.

If rabbits are bred for food only, the selection of stock is of less importance than when they are bred for show purposes. All that is required is a sizable animal of good, hardy stock. However, the points for which the fancier breeds the Belgian hare include also those most desirable in a food animal, so that if one can find stock with these characters well marked, and at the same time constitutionally sound, he should by all means obtain it. Pure-bred stock is more profitable, too, because it may be sold for breeding purposes as well as for the table.

GENERAL STANDARDS.

Color.—Belgian hare fanciers of a few years ago differed somewhat in opinion as to the proper standard of color for this animal. Some aimed at the color of the wild English hare—a sandy light brown. Most American breeders seem to have preferred a deeper reddish brown. In all other respects the standards were the same. The chief requisite concerning color is that it shall be as nearly uniform as possible throughout the upper surface of the animal and that the fur shall have a rich luster. The “ticking,” or shading, should be wavy rather than dotted. The belly and the lower surface of tail and hind feet should be whitish, but not pure white. The neck and breast should be somewhat lighter in shade than the back, but not in marked contrast with it, nor should the change in shade be abrupt.

Ears.—The ears of the mature Belgian should be about 5 to $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, varying with the size of the animal. They should be well shaped, strong at the base, and almost transparent at the middle. They must not be pendulous, but should, when the animal is quiet, be inclined backward, resting straight over the shoulders. A narrow black edging at the tip and as far down the front and back as possible marks the best stock.

Body.—The body of the Belgian is longer in proportion to the whole bulk than that of any other breed of the same size. Bucks and the younger females should never have the appendage known as "dewlap." This sometimes develops in the older does, but is regarded as a blemish in animals intended for show purposes. The back should be only slightly arched, and the forelegs and feet should be perfectly straight and free from white.

Age of breeding stock.—The beginner should always select mature animals about a year old for breeding stock. These may be known by the brisk, alert look, the small white teeth, and the small claws, almost hidden in the fur. Coarse, long claws are a sure indication of age. Listless-looking, rough-coated, or pot-bellied animals (except pregnant does) should be rejected, especially those having the whites of the eyes stained with yellow. A hutch rabbit in good health is gentle, neither savage nor overtimid, and does not scream when lifted by the ears.

The sexes.—The does selected for breeding may be of the same strain and even of the same litter, but the buck should be of different stock, and when possible obtained from another breeder. Hardy young animals with the best characteristics of the breed may be bought at from \$1 to \$2 each. Often they may be had of near-by breeders, thus saving the expense of carriage on long journeys by express.

HUTCHES AND PENS.

The Belgian hare does not do well when kept wild in open warrens. The common English rabbit is better for this purpose. A good many Belgians have been turned out in various parts of the United States, and in the vicinity of the city of New York and on the western coast this has resulted in some complaints of damage to crops. As a rule, however, and fortunately for the farmer, these animals, when obliged to shift for themselves, fall an easy prey to their enemies and disappear within a few months.

Belgian hares may be managed successfully in two ways: (1) Entirely in hutches, or (2) in outdoor fenced runs, or courts, with hutches for does when having young, and sleeping hutches for other stock. The hutch system with various modifications is the more common and is the only method adopted by rabbit fanciers who

raise for show. The use of small runs or rabbit courts to give the animals healthful exercise in fine weather is of advantage.

THE RABBITYRY.

The rabbitry may occupy part or all of a barn or shed, or be built in a sheltered space in the angle between buildings or walls. The indoor rabbitry has decided advantages. The place should be well ventilated, but not subject to drafts of cold or damp air. These may be prevented by ventilators in the roof, or by a system of elbowed pipes passing through the sides of the building and reaching a height of 2 or 3 feet above the openings.

HUTCHES.

Hutches for the Belgian hare should be somewhat larger than those intended for smaller breeds. They should be built of good lumber, have tight floors, and have at least 12 square feet of floor space and a height of 2 feet. If there is plenty of room in the rabbitry it is best to have the hutches separate; but they are usually set in tiers or stacks, two or three in height. Each hutch in the rank is complete in itself, so that its position may be shifted at any time.

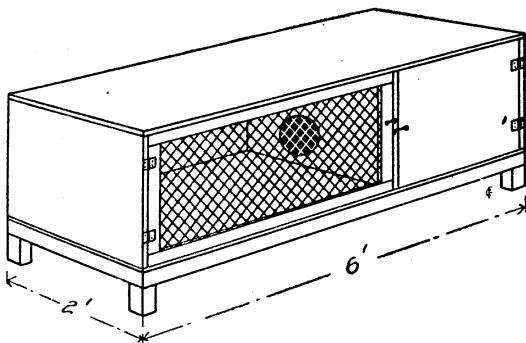


FIG. 2.—A convenient rabbit hutch.

A convenient indoor hutch (fig. 2) is one 6 by 2 by 2 feet, with a movable partition dividing off a third of the space at one end for a nest and sleeping chamber. The partition has a smooth hole to permit passage of the animals from one part to the other. The front of the hutch has two doors, one of wire netting, the other of wood. The wooden door opens to the sleeping chamber and should close tightly. It is best to use metal hinges for the doors. The partition may slide in a groove between the doors or may be put in and taken out through one of the door openings.

Outdoor hutches should have sloping roofs and overhanging eaves to protect them from rain. The screened door should have a sliding cover of wood or be fitted with a removable cloth cover. Small holes bored near the top of the hutch will afford all necessary ventilation.

Movable hutches (fig. 3) have some advantages. They may be carried outdoors in fine weather and taken back under shelter at night or during storms. Long, narrow cleats projecting at both ends of

the hutch are all that are needed to convert the ordinary hutch into a movable one. Two forms of outdoor hutch sometimes used are shown

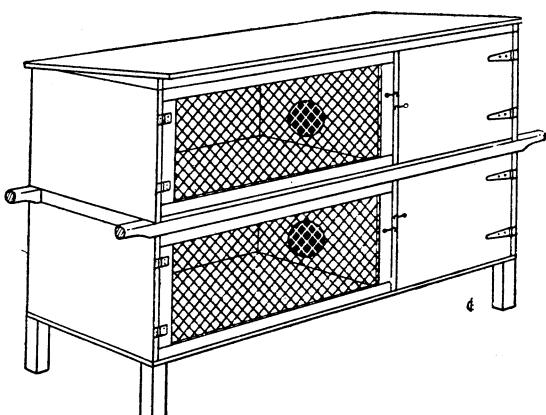


FIG. 3.—Movable outdoor hutch.

inside the court may be small boxes of any sort if they are stout and waterproof. They should have sliding doors to confine the rabbits if desired, and should also have small holes near the top for ventilation. If a court is used, hutches will still be needed for the breeding does.

A rabbit-proof fence to inclose a

grass court should be made of heavy poultry netting 5 or 6 feet wide and of $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh. The posts, projecting 3 or 4 feet above the ground, should be well set outside the edge of the court. The

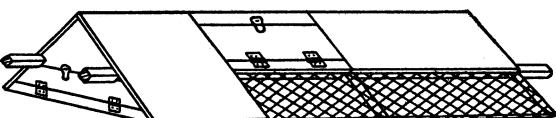


FIG. 4.—A simple movable outdoor hutch.

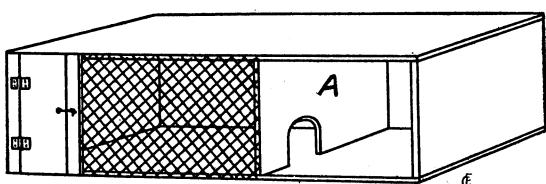
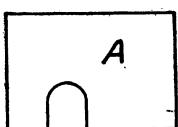


FIG. 5.—A simple outdoor hutch.

turned inward to keep them from climbing over. Brackets at the tops of the posts make the best support for the overhanging netting, although horizontal pieces of wood nailed to the posts will answer.

in figures 4 and 5. That in figure 4 has no floor except a wire screen, permitting the rabbits to eat grass or other herbage that projects through the netting.

COURTS.

A rabbit court may be paved or floored, or it may be a grass court surrounded by a rabbit-proof fence. Sleeping hutes

inside the court may be small boxes of any sort if they are stout and waterproof. They should have sliding doors to confine the rabbits if desired, and should also have small holes near the top for ventilation. If a court is used, hutes will still be needed for the breeding does.

A rabbit-proof fence to inclose a grass court should be made of heavy poultry netting 5 or 6 feet wide and of $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh. The posts, projecting 3 or 4 feet above the ground, should be well set outside the edge of the court. The netting is stapled to the posts, leaving a projection of 6 inches or more at the top and about 18 inches at the ground, to be turned into the court. The lower edge should be covered with 10 or 12 inches of soil to prevent the animals from digging out. The upper edge also is

FOOD AND FEEDING.

The rabbit thrives well on a diversity of vegetable foods. Many writers on the care of this animal prescribe elaborate lists of foods to be followed week in and out. The fact is that a few staple foods are sufficient, but no animal is more adaptable to sudden changes of diet; so that one can feed what is available or cheap, the idea being to produce weight with the least possible outlay of money.

GRAIN AND HAY.

The best grain for rabbits is oats, either whole or crushed, though corn meal, barley, or other grain may often be fed by way of change. The crushed oats are best when freshly broken, and a hand mill for preparing them is a valuable adjunct to a rabbitry.

Hay is a necessary part of the rabbit's diet, and if possible that of the very best quality should be used. It should be entirely free from moldiness, and the unsweated is always preferable. If one has small grounds where suitable grass grows, the mowing may be done at short intervals and the hay thoroughly cured in such small quantities that no sweating takes place. However, if sweet hay is not available the sweated may be fed to the rabbits without injury, unless it be moldy.

GREEN FOODS.

Rabbits require some green foods for winter. Cabbages, kale, spinach, and rape leaves are recommended. Turnips, beets, and mangels are often fed and have been recommended by many rabbit breeders, but they do not keep so well as the foods just named. Turnips, unless kept in the ground, wilt by midwinter and are then of little use. Beets and mangels keep better, and the latter are the main dependence of some English rabbitries; but, on the whole, cabbages are more economical, as well as more satisfactory in every way. They are usually available until green stuff grows in the spring. Whatever green food is put away for winter use must be stored where frost can not touch it, as freezing unfitst it for rabbits. Parsnips left in the ground all winter make an excellent early spring rabbit food after the frost leaves the ground in which they grow.

FEEDING.

Rabbits should be fed twice daily. Ordinary stock is fed morning and evening, but suckling does should also have a noon meal or be given more than they will eat at the other meals. The general rule is to feed only as much grain or green stuff as the animals will consume. Hay is put into the hutch to be available at any time, a part of it being left as litter. The exact amount of grain or green stuff for each rabbit at a meal can not be stated, as the appetite varies greatly at different times. Observations of the quantity left over

when the animals quit feeding will soon enable the feeder to adjust the meals to the needs of the rabbits. Overfeeding is a much more common mistake than underfeeding.

Winter feeding.—In winter one of the meals each day should be chiefly of green food (as roots or cabbage) and the other mainly of grain. Roots, cabbage, celery, and the like should be washed clean of soil, but should not be wet when given to the rabbits. If green food is given in the morning, the evening meal should be whole oats or other grain for mature animals. Those under 3 months of age should be given crushed oats with a little bran, as they can not so well masticate whole grain. A little hay should be given with each meal.

Summer feeding.—In summer green food should be the chief reliance, and only a small quantity of hay or grain is needed. Rabbits are fond of all kinds of garden vegetables, besides wild parsley, dandelion, plantain, dock, and other weeds, as well as lawn clippings and other grasses. Agreeable changes in diet are always possible in summer, but overfeeding should be avoided and also the feeding of stuff that is wet with dew or rain. It is best to cut clover or other green food in the afternoon before the dew falls and to spread it under shelter, so that it will not heat, but be still fresh at feeding time.

Corrective feeding.—Occasionally a warm mash of cooked potatoes or of the leaves of clover hay mixed with "chops" or a little bran is desirable. Sometimes a little sulphur may be sprinkled with the mash, although a little flour mixed with the ordinary grain has about as good an effect in correcting looseness of the bowels. In cold weather some breeders feed a warm mash each evening.

Unless green food is abundant rabbits should be given water daily. In warm weather the water pans should be filled with fresh water twice each day. The does suckling young or soon to have young should be given milk diluted with one-third warm water.

A piece of rock salt kept in each hutch affords a steady supply as needed and makes it unnecessary to supply salt in the food.

Rabbits under 3 or 4 months old should be limited in the amount of green food. If allowed too much they are apt to become "pot-bellied." When a young rabbit is seen to grow big about its belly, the use of green food should be discontinued and the animal given plenty of exercise. Under such treatment it will soon recover, but if the green food is continued the disease usually terminates in convulsions and death. Old rabbits are not subject to this trouble.

BREEDING.

It is not desirable to pair rabbits until they are at least 6 months old, although they may be bred earlier. Some breeders do not mate

animals under 10 months of age. Healthy mature rabbits produce larger and stronger litters than younger stock do.

METHODS OF MATING.

Different breeders adopt different methods of mating. Some leave the buck in the hutch of the doe for but a few minutes, and others leave him overnight. The older does should be mated in February, but it is well to defer mating a young doe until March. She then has young in April, when there is abundant green food to induce a good flow of milk. This lacteal development once well established, she is likely always to give abundance of milk for her young. If pairing begins in February each doe may be expected to produce four litters a year, the young coming at intervals of about 12 weeks, with a longer rest in midwinter.

PREPARING FOR THE YOUNG.

The gestation period of the rabbit is about 30 days. When the doe is nearly ready to bear young, her hutch should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, after which a good supply of soft hay or straw (oat straw is best) should be placed in the body of the hutch to enable her to arrange her nest. If the hutch is without a nesting compartment, a box should be placed in a corner. It should be 18 to 20 inches long, about a foot deep, 8 or 10 inches wide, and without a lid. Make a hole in one end large enough for the doe to pass through easily, and turn the box upside down. The doe will arrange her nest a day or two before the young are born. At this time extra attention should be given to her food. She should have milk and warm water regularly, and a pan of clean water should be kept constantly in the hutch. While a doe is heavy with young and for a few days after their birth, extreme care should be taken to see that she is not frightened by cats or dogs or even by strange visitors in the rabbitry. Avoid touching the nest or handling the young, unless it is absolutely necessary.

DIET WHILE NURSING.

During the first week or two after having young the doe may be fed almost entirely on warm milk and bread. This is recommended for the bulk of the morning and evening meals, with a small supply of green food. Green food may be given also in the middle of the day, and the daily proportion gradually increased. Boiled mush made of corn meal is also an excellent food for suckling does, but most other pasty or watery foods should be avoided as likely to derange the bowels. Milk, and indeed any soft food, should be fed in a separate earthenware dish, especially in warm weather, when it sours quickly. The dish should be washed and scalded often.

NUMBER OF YOUNG.

The number of young produced by the Belgian hare varies greatly. Litters of 10 or 12 occur, but these are too large for a doe to raise. An average of 6 or 7 is all that should be saved. It is of advantage to have several does breed at about the same time, for the number of young may then be adjusted by transferring from those that have too many to those having few. The young begin to leave the nest when about 3 weeks old. At this time the nesting box or compartments should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and then furnished with fresh straw or hay.

WEANING.

The young may be weaned when a month old, but it is better to leave them with the doe two or three weeks longer. Remove two each day until all are transferred to another hutch, which may be large enough to accommodate any number. They do well together until they are 3 or 4 months old, when their development will compel separation of the sexes. After this any number of does may occupy the same hutch, but bucks, unless thoroughly accustomed to each other, will fight.

MARKETING.

At 4 months the young Belgian hare should be ready for the table, and if it has been properly fed should weigh about 6 pounds or even more. This weight is about the best for market rabbits, and immediate sale is more profitable than keeping to maturity. Some breeders sell at 10 to 12 weeks and aim to have their stock weigh about $5\frac{1}{2}$ pounds at that age. To do this requires that the animals be kept in small hutches where they can have but little exercise and that they be fed heavily from the time they are weaned. Under this treatment they grow very rapidly and are really superior for the table.

MARKET RETURNS.

It is not easy to state what a breeder should realize for market rabbits. Much depends on local conditions and especially upon the familiarity of the public with the excellence of hutch rabbits for the table. If the animals are new to a market, a demand for them will have to be built up, but as a rule they soon will become popular. Better prices usually can be had by selling directly to the consumer, thus saving the middleman's profit. One may make arrangements to deliver regularly or periodically to hotels and restaurants, but often a poultry dealer will agree to take a certain quantity at regular intervals. If members of the family look after the rabbits, so that there is no outlay for labor, and if the hutches are built at home, the cost of rearing may be greatly reduced and much of the income

will be net gain. Although it must be admitted that rabbits require more care than usually is given to poultry on our farms, their management has the advantage that it is more interesting, especially to the younger members of the family.

DISPOSING OF SURPLUS.

After selecting the best stock for breeding purposes it is well to dispose of the remainder as rapidly as conditions warrant. If those to be sold are to be marketed alive all that is needed is to crate them properly and forward them to their destination. This is the better plan in hot weather, as the carcasses do not keep well. If carcasses are to be delivered the methods of killing and packing are important considerations.

KILLING.

There are two excellent ways of killing the animals. The easier and probably the more humane is to dislocate the neck. Almost all gamekeepers know this method and can show the novice quickly how it is done, but probably a description will be understood. Take the two hind legs of the rabbit firmly in the left hand, place the thumb of the right hand just behind the ears where the neck joins the skull, the palm resting on the left side of the face and the fingers holding firmly under the jaws. Then stretch out the animal quickly and with force, pressing in the right thumb and bending the head backward. The dislocation will be felt distinctly. This method requires considerable strength, but when the knack of it is learned it entails less suffering than any other. Another excellent way of killing is to hold the rabbit up in the left hand, as in the first method, and then to strike a sharp blow on the back of the head with a round stick, stunning the animal. As soon as the neck is dislocated or the rabbit stunned the jugular vein should be cut with a sharp knife and the animal hung head downward to bleed.

DRESSING.

The next step in preparing a carcass for market is to remove the paunch and entrails, as their presence would soon taint the meat. With a sharp-pointed knife make a longitudinal cut down the middle of the belly, dividing the skin and the thin abdominal walls, but being careful not to cut the intestines. Turn out the paunch and the intestines, but leave the lungs, liver, heart, and kidneys in place. Next make a slit between the large tendon and the bone of one hind leg and slip the other leg through the cut, so that the carcass may be readily hung up. It should hang long enough to stiffen before being packed.

PACKING.

For packing the rabbits for market a basket or hamper of the ordinary shape and having movable flat slatted trays to enable one to

pack the carcasses in separate layers is recommended. Such a hamper permits free circulation of the air not only on the edge but also throughout the package, and the carcasses packed in this way reach their destination in an attractive state, instead of in the messy condition so often seen in the wild rabbits marketed in America.

COOKING AND SERVING.

The cooking of domestic rabbits does not differ greatly from that required for domestic fowls, and an experienced housewife can prepare them in a variety of savory ways. As the meat is naturally somewhat dry, as much as possible of the juices should be retained in cooking it. The following standard recipes for preparing rabbits apply to mature animals of wild and domestic kinds. For young Belgian hares weighing 5 pounds or less and young wild rabbits the time of cooking may be somewhat reduced.

Baked rabbit en casserole.—Lay alternate layers of rabbit and thin slices of bacon, season with thyme, sage, thinly sliced onions, and salt to taste. Fill the dish with water, bake in a slow oven for one and a half hours. A covered baking dish or pan may be used instead of a casserole, and the meat may be boned or not as desired.

Rabbit fricassee.—Brown some butter in a hot iron skillet. Then fry the hare, previously cut up, brown on both sides. Next cover the meat with hot water and stew until it is thoroughly tender, seasoning it to taste. At the end of the stewing, let the meat again fry brown.

Rabbit pot pie.—Cut a dressed rabbit into small pieces; salt and let stand over night. Place the cut pieces in a pot previously filled with warm water enough to cover the meat. Put in a medium-sized onion, sliced, and stew over a medium fire until the meat is tender. Prepare a rich pie-crust dough in the proportions of 1 quart of flour, half a teaspoonful of salt, and a tablespoonful of baking powder, with enough water to give it proper consistency. Roll out flat as for pie crust, spread lard over the surface; fold and reroll twice, spreading lard each time. Line the pan bottom and sides with dough and fill with meat and alternate layers of potato in small pieces and a few small onions. Use the thickened broth from the stew pot as a gravy, pouring it into the pan over the contents. Cover with dough, place in an oven, and bake for an hour, or until the whole upper crust is a light golden brown; serve hot.

The above recipes are offered merely as suggestions. The hind legs and saddles of the rabbit contain much meat and may be cooked in many different ways; boned they make delicious croquettes. The front quarters and head may be used as soup stock; the broth may be seasoned to taste and served with vegetables, barley, or rice.

RABBIT SKINS.

Before the present war an enormous trade in rabbit skins was carried on abroad. Throughout Europe practically all the skins of marketed rabbits were saved. The number produced in Great Britain and Ireland was estimated at about 30 million annually. According to the British trade returns for 1910, there were imported

during that year undressed rabbit skins to the number of more than 82 million. Of these over 11 million came from Belgium, nearly 4 million from France, upward of 43 million from Australia, and more than 7 million from New Zealand.

Most rabbit skins are sold in bales by weight, the fur from them being used for felting purposes and the skins utilized for making glue. The better skins are sold by the dozen and when dressed become the "cony" of the fur trade, often sold under fanciful names. White pelts are made up in imitation of arctic fox, or sheared in imitation of ermine.

Gray rabbits are dyed brown or black and become "Baltic black fox" or "Baltic brown fox"; seal-dyed, they became "inland seal," "electric seal," "coast seal," or "near seal." Reputable furriers avoid such names, or, if they use them, frankly explain that the goods are cony or rabbit. Garments made of these furs, though handsome and comfortable, have little durability and are therefore cheap. The pelts, unlike those of American wild rabbits and the hares of the Old World, are strong and durable, but the fur wears off easily.

The war has interfered with importations of rabbit fur from Europe and Australia to such an extent that both hatters' fur and cony have increased greatly in price. Furriers, however, seem to have made little attempt to find or utilize a home supply. American rabbit breeders are raising all the kinds of rabbits that produce the best cony of the fur shops. The climate here is as favorable for fur production as that of central Europe, and there is no reason why the sale of pelts of domestic rabbits from all parts of America should not help materially to increase the breeders' profits.

The fur from rabbits of uniform solid colors is more valuable than that from spotted or piebald varieties. Solid black, white, steel gray, and similar kinds are most in demand, but the fur of the Belgian hare is also desirable. Size and age of the animal are factors in determining the fur value, and winter skins from rabbits kept out of doors are of course superior to those of animals kept in warm quarters or killed when the fur is shedding. Skins of immature rabbits slaughtered for food are less valuable than those of mature animals, but should sell for prices that would repay well the work of skinning and curing them. Rabbit skins intended for manufacture into garments should be taken off "cased," like skins of muskrats or minks. For hatters' fur they are taken off "flat" or "open."

AILMENTS OF RABBITS.

If properly cared for, rabbits are remarkably free from diseases. The more common ailments result from insanitary surroundings, lack of care in feeding, and improper ventilation. The hutches

should be cleaned frequently and fresh sawdust or other fine litter used to take up liquids, so that the hutches do not become foul. Such ailments as mange, scurf, surfeit, and the disease of the eyes known as ophthalmia are due usually to foul hutches. Cold snuffles and the like result from improper ventilation, sudden drafts of cold air in overheated buildings, and similar causes. The disorders of the digestive organs come from feeding young rabbits too freely of wet and juicy green foods or from too radically changing their diet. Most diseases are preventable, and if the cause is understood remedies will suggest themselves. For pot-belly, constipation, and like ailments, exercise is the best remedy. If constipation continues, a diet of soft foods or a little castor oil usually gives relief. For diarrhea a little dry barley meal is good, and sometimes powdered acorns in skim milk are an effective remedy.

Incrustations known as ear cancer and accumulations of ear wax may be cured by mechanically removing the incrustations with the aid of lukewarm water and then washing with a soft sponge and applying powdered boracic acid. The animal should be held by an assistant. The treatment must often be repeated daily.

The most serious disease known among hutch rabbits in America is coccidiosis. It is caused by internal parasites, and when present in the rabbitry kills many young rabbits. Extreme caution is needed to prevent its introduction, and new stock obtained should for a time be kept isolated from the regular hutches. Keeping the hutches in stacks aids in spreading the infection. Absolute cleanliness may do much to prevent the disease. Whenever a number of the young rabbits under good care develop a pot-bellied appearance, particularly where it is accompanied by symptoms of cold and snuffles, there is reason to suspect that old and apparently healthy animals may be afflicted with chronic coccidiosis and are expelling coccidia from their bodies. Isolation of the affected hutch and its occupants, together with disinfection, is the first step to be taken while the exact nature of the trouble is being determined.

LITERATURE ABOUT RABBITS.

If serious diseases affect his stock, the amateur will find it advantageous to obtain a standard treatise on the management of rabbits. This will contain detailed instruction for the treatment of the more common ailments. As the business of rearing rabbits is carried on much more extensively in England than in America, the best handbooks are published abroad. They may be obtained through any bookseller.

